



Birmingham

Research Enhancement Award Program

Director: Catarina I. Kiefe, PhD, MD

Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2008

The Deep South Center on Effectiveness (DSCE) has emerged from the administrative suspension with a new focus and strategic plan. We will expand on our prior expertise of promoting collaborations among practitioners, organizational leaders, patients, and health services researchers to generate and apply new implementation knowledge, with a new, specific focus on acute care, advanced illness and transitions in care. The goals of the DSCE are to improve hospital based VA care by; 1) producing evidence on how to implement evidence; 2) develop and implement innovative partnerships for HSR with VA and non-VA partners; 3) build a scholarly, multidisciplinary core of first rate investigators; and 4) build an exemplary, dynamic infrastructure for HSR in the VA.

Birmingham first received funding in July 2002 as a Targeted Research Enhancement Program (TREP) with the goal of becoming a Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) by 2007. In April 2004, we were awarded the REAP designation three years ahead of schedule and in 2006 we were approved for five years of continued funding. In January of 2007 our center was subject to an administrative suspension that was not lifted until March of 2008. As a consequence of the suspension, we lost our leadership as well as several key REAP staff. We have had significant barriers in resuming our research, primarily related to data issues. We lost our programmers and are now negotiating with OIT on how these key personnel will be replaced. We have a plan in place to hire most programmers on the tradition health science specialist track and have asked for one 2210 personnel with programming and network administration skills. Other barriers are more related to the structure of our data on the server and making this structure better for the investigators and staff.

Despite these challenges, our center has two newly funded Principal Investigators. We have a new acting center PI, Dr. Mary Hawn, who is a leader in surgery research in the VA. Even without access to data, our group has had a number of key impacts on the field, including developing a new surgical case cancellation data dictionary of measurable and actionable reasons that is currently being piloted at 5 VA centers. We foresee the upcoming year as a period of strategic growth in our new research theme and rebuilding our infrastructure to be more dynamic and responsive to investigators, funding opportunities and our VA leadership. We will build on our prior successful partnerships with Patient Care Services (PCS), the Office of Quality and Performance (OQP) and the National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) to expand on prior projects focused on hospital based care. A specific example where we have already accomplished this goal is our rural health research partnership with the Tuscaloosa VA and funded by VISN-7 for \$1,000,000.